

Priorities

"Seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness
and all these things shall be added unto you."

Matthew 6:33

Everything changes when we become a follower of Christ. The things that used to hold attraction for us no longer seem to. The things we liked to do no longer interest us as much. In some cases new Christians can change so much that even their friends don't recognise them anymore. Yet some new Christians are flabagasted when they read about the type of commitment Jesus demanded in his followers. This has caused some to prematurely throw in the towel with a *what's the use?* type of attitude. Does Jesus expect us as new Christians to sell all we have, preach and witness full-time, pray hours on end, work ceaselessly for the church, study the Bible until we've memorised it cover to cover and still have time for lunch (in between fasts of course!) ? The answer to these questions is found in understanding your priorities as a new Christian.

Priority #5 YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOURSELF

God is concerned about you. He wants you to enjoy life. Jesus said that He came that we might have life super abundantly (John 10:10). Each one of us needs to be ourselves. Each of us relax differently. At one time Jesus even insisted that His followers take a little rest. Having a good relationship with ourself is expressed in having dreams, goals and ambitions. Don't think that you have to become a clone. You are an individual that God called. Your desires to live a successful life are all healthy. Yet this priority is over-ridden by the next greater one:

Priority #4 YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO CHURCH

Every ministry or job that God now gives is an expression of His Church. Therefore everything you do for God is actually representing the Church. God has got something special for you. For some God calls them to serve Him full-time. This is often preceded by call from God to study at a Bible College. For others God sends them over seas to be missionaries. For others, God is simply looking for us to obey Him and do everything He tells us to do. Many Christians have a great desire to be used by God. They usually make themselves available to their Church expressing a willingness to be used in any area. This could involve various kinds of leadership, general helping, or something quite unique. Yet there is a priority even greater than this one:

Priority #3 YOUR EMPLOYMENT

Your paid to do a job when you're employed by someone else. You should put in your best effort. The Bible says we should work as if Jesus was our boss. Therefore it says, that whether we're being watched or not, we should always work hard. Your employment has priority over you and your desires and also your weekday church commitments. For example, if there was a church conference on during your normal working hours, should you take a *sickie* to attend? No. Yet there is a priority that is higher than your employment:

Priority #2- YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR FAMILY

When you got saved, God put love into your heart that you never knew was possible. He made you able to forgive, where you thought forgiveness was impossible. If you're married, your priority is to love your spouse. Close behind this, if you have them, is to love your children. They take priority over all the remaining priorities. If your job calls for you to do things that are going to harm your relationship with your wife or family, you shouldn't do it. For example, you're almost running late for work. Suddenly someone in your family seriously hurts themselves and needs urgent medical attention. What's your priority? Get them to a doctor! Work has to wait. But there's an even higher priority than you, your ministry, your job, or your family:

Priority #1 - YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Our supreme example of priorities is Jesus. Often times He would rise before daybreak, or stay all night, to pray to His Father. Many well meaning Christians will say that Jesus made *prayer* His priority. I think they might have missed the point. In the same breathe they'll talk about *prayer-power*. Again I think they've missed the point. Prayer was never meant to be something that earned anything. It is simply *spiritual conversation*. Jesus didn't pray so that He could get all-powered-up, He simply spent hours in conversation with His Father in heaven. He didn't do this for any reward, or to earn any power- He just did it so He could be with His Father. Jesus loved His Father. Prayer was simply the natural result of that love. For Christ, His relationship with His Father, was His first priority.

We too should have this as our first priority. Our relationship with God and His Son is assisted by 1) the Bible, and 2) the Holy Spirit. The Word of God (the Bible), reveals to us how our Father thinks, feels, acts, and speaks. Jesus said that He was going to send the Holy Spirit along side of us to also guide us through the Word to an intimate understanding of who God is. Paul the apostle also made knowing God his chief priority- *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection* (Phil. 3:10). Before we can show others how to know God, we must know Him first! The moment you got saved, that was a measure of knowing God. Now you can share with others what you've discovered- how to get saved!

Your relationship with God must never be confused with your position in your church, your ministry or your family background. God is first and foremost looking for intimacy from His people not manual laborers. Jesus said in Matthew 7, that there would be those who stood before Him on judgment Day and claim that they had done many things for Him. Yet despite their ministry for God, they never knew God or allowed God to know them. For this God severely judged them.

Although we can't see God, He's very real. His Word also tells us that He's very close. We have the powerful privelege, because of what Jesus has done, to know and be with God right now. This is our chief priority.

Amen.

1. Our relationship with God.
2. Our relationship with our family.
3. Our employment.
4. Our ministry.
5. Ourselves.